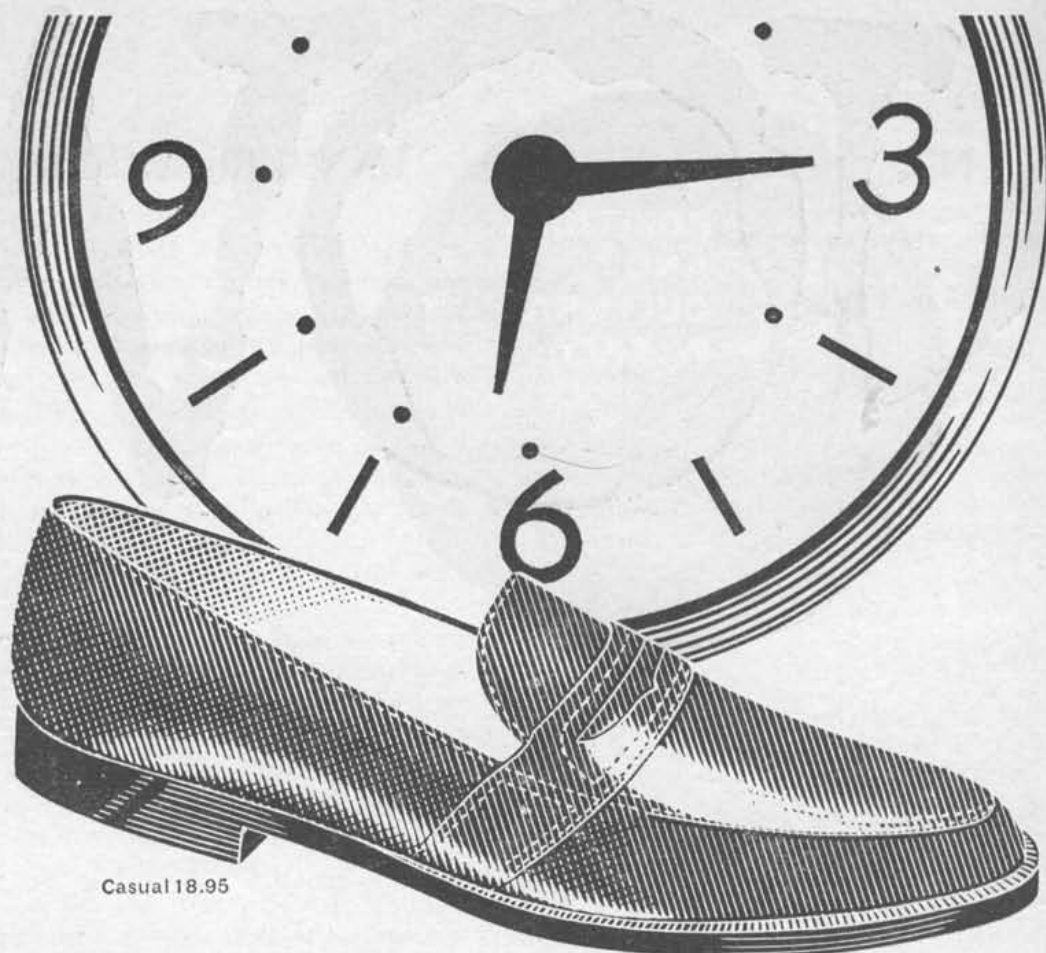




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DANGERS AHEAD ?

QUICK action has followed the Defence Minister's statements in Parliament about massive concentration of troops on India's borders and warlike preparations in China and Pakistan. The States have been put on the alert against the imminence of enemy attack, possibly on more than one front. Representatives of some eastern States were in Calcutta recently to confer with the new Director-General of Civil Defence whose weeklong visit to West Bengal must have been more than a mere familiarization trip. Close on this visit, the civil defence organization, which was quiescent for months, has suddenly become active; do's and don'ts for citizens in the event of air raids have again started appearing in newspapers, and elaborate civil defence measures are said to be in the offing.

Almost a similar situation has developed on the other side of the border. Pakistan has only one enemy against our two, and all its military preparations are consequently being traced to India's belligerence. There is the same charge of concentration of troops and wilful violation of the Tashkent agreement—by India of course. Maulana Bhasani is reported to have written a letter to Mr Kosygin accusing India of wrecking the agreement and blaming Russia for military aid to India; this is perhaps a follow-up of official action already taken. Similar protests have gone from India also. Whatever Mr Kosygin may have done in the matter, there is no sign yet of any detente. The battle of the agenda for the ministerial-level meeting which both countries have agreed to in principle is still on; and there may be an accrual of tension if Pakistan raises the Kashmir question at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference and at the United Nations, which meets later this month, and India walks out.

Curiously, the similarity between the two countries of the sub-continent appears to be endless. The internal situation in both is far from comforting to the authorities. Despite the institutional differences, both are passing through an upsurge of popular resentment against the waywardness of their Governments. In the two Bengals especially, the masses are on the move; a threat is developing to the established order for its failure to arrest the steady deterioration of living conditions. On this side of the border the general election next year will be a period of reckoning; on the other side the challenge may have to find expression through some other form.

There is no doubt that in such a situation an outbreak of hostilities will force people on both sides of the border to shelve their grievances and give their Governments a desperately needed respite. Such gain, if it can be so called, will only be marginal and benefit a few; how colossal, on the other hand, the cost can be was shown by the 22-day war a year ago. These musings are valid even in a wider context—in India's case at least. India cannot, it will not be allowed to, remain unaffected if the war in Vietnam escalates into a Sino-American conflict. Is the imminence of such a conflict within the deliberate calculations of our rulers? There is perhaps a complex of reasons for the grim prospects that are said to be ahead of us. Not all of them may be direct threats, and there is

need for circumspection. This is no argument against alertness. But patriotism is too precious an asset for unthinking dissipation; any call on it must be in genuine national, not sectional, interest.

Draft And Reality

The gentlemen in the Planning Commission will have satisfied their essay-writing proclivities. Apart from this, there is not another excuse why the document claiming to be the Draft Outline of the Fourth Plan had to be inflicted on the public. Political and social realities are assumed away, the preparation of the plans therefore becomes an exercise in unadulterated formalism. The rate of growth of the economy over the Third Plan period has been dismal. The per capita income of the nation has stagnated since 1960-61. Almost 50 per cent of the public sector projects originally included in the Third Plan have been held over; in the rest, the pace of progress is halting. With the purposive dismantling of the control apparatus and the weakening of the public sector, socialism is now a receding goal, if it is still a goal. None of these realities however deters the essay-writers in Yojana Bhavan. Once more, the Fourth Plan draft promises an annual rate of 5.5 per cent growth of per capita national income, compounded of a posited agricultural growth of the order of 5.6 per cent and growth of industrial output in the region of 13.7 per cent. Quick implementation of projects is reiterated as a social obligation, along with the maintenance of price stability. Lest unfamiliarity breeds contempt, steady enlargement of supply of essential goods so as to make the economy self-reliant in course of the next decade is spelled out as a major task. And, of course, clichés are strewn all over which say again and again that agriculture, and inputs for agriculture, are major priorities.

We have been here before. The Indian electorate—at least a large portion of it—is unlikely to take the Planning Commission at its face value any longer. The slide from the socialist preambles has continued in the document. If one compares the suggested outlays in the earlier Memorandum of the Plan, made public in October 1964, with last week's series of announcements, it will be seen

that, in money terms, the public sector outlay has been raised by barely 2.5 per cent from the level of Rs. 15,620 crores to Rs. 16,000 crores, but the corresponding figure for the private sector has expanded by more than 11 per cent, from Rs. 6,980 crores to Rs. 7,750 crores.

Even these so-called outlays, however, are meaningless categories. Between October 1964 and today prices have shot up nearly by 25 per cent; the outlays now proposed thus represent a mere shadow of what was being contemplated two years ago. Despite glib talk to the contrary, there are no indications in the Plan draft that the appropriate instruments for regulating prices would be effectively applied. Aggregate Plan outlay might well reach or even exceed Rs. 23,500 crores by 1970-71; in real terms, this need not however represent anything much beyond what was accomplished during the Third Plan. Prices can level off only if there is a spurt in production; the entire assumption of price stability therefore begs the question of growth. Since growth is a function not of gimmicks, but of a set of socio-political structural shifts which the present Government is incapable of carrying out, both growth and price stability would seem to be wrapped in uncertainties.

The authors of the document, poor souls, live by targets alone. The wishful fulfilment which has coloured their arithmetic of resource-raising in the public sector has an antique charm. They take credit for external assistance amounting to Rs. 4,700 crores in terms of post-devaluation rates of exchange. This represents no more than the equivalent of roughly Rs. 580 crores per annum in pre-devaluation currency, that is, somewhat less than what was the average flow in the Third Plan period. The burden of loan repayments is much, much increased, and the Plan is supposed to have an enlarged physical size; the authorities nevertheless would have us believe that they could make do with a smaller bill of foreign aid. It is little use mentioning import substitution either in this context, because, if anything, our relative dependence on the rest of the world has gone up in recent years.

At the other end, there is a large gap between the requirements and the estimate of availability of domestic resources, something of the order

of Rs. 2,000 crores. The draft indulges in some cautious meanderings, but clearly the political economy of taxation has proved too much for the authors. A mild surcharge on land revenue is suggested. For the last ten years, the annual yield from land revenue has been of the order of only Rs. 120 crores annually. Even if the proposed surcharge is placed at 100 per cent, what the Government will get will be hopelessly inadequate to meet the overall needs of the Plan.

But all this is folly to the occupiers of Yojana Bhavan. They follow the dictum of the *Gita*, and do not hanker after fruits. Meanwhile, the taxpayers keep on paying for the pastime of five-yearly essay-writing.

Goa's Choice

Goa's political crimes are many. Its people failed to throw out the Portuguese, thus making it inescapable for India to move in with her forces; this simple and remarkably unbloody operation was used by many detractors of India to her embarrassment. Then, three years ago, Goa failed to vote the Congress to power; to the Congress Parliamentary Board this must be the bigger offence. It has now decided to hold what it calls an opinion poll in which the people of Goa will indicate whether they want to be administered by the Centre, as at present, or merge with Maharashtra. Mysore's claim does not receive even a mention; but it seems unlikely that Mr Nijalingappa will let the matter rest there. It is not that the Congress does not know what to do with Goa; rather it is that the Congress does not know what to do with its divided self.

The Constitution of India provides for elections; it has nothing at all to say about a referendum, even if it is called an opinion poll. It may well be questioned whether a particular political party or its executive has any right to ask the Election Commissioner to organize a referendum; this is precisely what Mr Sadiq Ali, General Secretary of the Congress, appears to have done. The manner in which the ruling party increasingly arrogates to itself the functions of the Government is almost indecent. As a Centrally administered territory, Goa is Parliament's charge; any decision regarding the way it will decide its future should have been announced in Parliament

by the Prime Minister and not by a party official to a group of reporters.

It is not very clear what the Congress Party's manoeuvre is. Mr Sadiq Ali breezily brushed aside all relevant questions as matters of detail. The question whether Goans outside Goa will be eligible to vote in the referendum seems a loaded one. Madrasis living in Bengal or Bengalis living in Madras are not known to vote in their home States; they exercise their franchise in the place of their residence. No reason has been given why an exception may be considered for Goa. Mr Sadiq Ali was equally evasive about the future of the Bandodkar Government; he thought it was a matter of detail whether the Government would continue in power when the opinion poll is held. That the question was asked suggests that Mr Bandodkar's continuance or suspension might make a material difference to the result of the poll. It is to be hoped that there is no implied reflection on the Election Commission.

When Pondicherry and the other French possessions came into India, Mr Nehru said something about preserving the "personality" of these places. Some people in Goa and the other Portuguese possessions like to think that they too have a personality distinct from the Indian. This is not necessarily treasonable, although much too much can be made of personalities of places with different colonial backgrounds. Truer is the Congress habit of thinking that everything non-Congress is un-Indian activity.

A Sense Of Futility

The accomplished public speaker that he is, Dr Radhakrishnan amused a Calcutta audience last week with his story of Hitler and his Brown Shirts, Mussolini with his Black Shirts and Gandhiji with no shirts. The President's purpose was serious. He was voicing a deeper distress over the growing inclination towards violence in the political life of the country; he was pointing out the total incompatibility of violent action with parliamentary democracy; he was putting it to the youth of the country that the violent tendencies are sadly at variance with the traditions set by Mahatma Gandhi who by the whole world is credited with a successful non-violent political mo-

vement attaining a country's freedom from foreign rule without resort to force. The President's condemnation of violence in politics was, however, conditional; he did not forget to refer to the need "to fight poverty and squalor".

Violence has indeed no place in a just society, which ours is not. Pressure, however, is a recognized, perhaps inescapable, part of the democratic process. Violence need not be the other name for this pressure; trouble could be. Only on August 25 Mr P. C. Sen was said to have returned from New Delhi with the impression summed up neatly in the headline: "Trouble-Free Calcutta Gets No Aid". The West Bengal Chief Minister was referring to what he thought, after a meeting of the National Development Council, was the indifference of the Union Government and the Planning Commission to the problems of West Bengal in general and Calcutta in particular. Significant is his attribution of this indifference to the relative quiet in eastern India in recent months. Mr Sen could hardly be accused of having put a premium on the threatened demonstrations of the coming weeks; his remark could yet have some such indirect effect.

It is widely believed that in recent years there has been a steady accretion of power in the States, eroding in the process some of the Centre's authority. If, in these circumstances, a Chief Minister is made to feel that only the massive pressure of trouble, rarely unaccompanied by violence, keeps New Delhi awake, the Opposition in general can hardly be blamed for its apparent conviction that speeches in Parliament alone cut little ice. Rightly or wrongly, the Government, including Mr P. C. Sen's, gives the impression that its powers of anticipation are as limited as is its responsiveness to the temper of the people. Hence the temptation of extra-parliamentary activities, which can rapidly lead to violence. Nor is violence restricted to politics. In Cuttack recently a licensed grog shop was picketed by gangs of boys until its owner announced its closure; another, licensed or otherwise, was simply burnt down. Champions of prohibition are under an obligation to express themselves on the Cuttack incident, which may also have hidden political undertones. The general problem of violence in politics will

perhaps receive wider and soberer consideration when the Government is seen to make only the transparently justified use of its own monopoly of force.

A Question Of Carat

Whether or not the Government is able to provide the people with enough food, it has decided not to stand in the way of their buying gold instead. And while food may continue to be adulterated, there will be no difficulty in procuring high-purity gold. All this, the Congress party presumably expects, will win for it a few more votes in the coming elections, and the party bosses are shrewd enough to realize that they can no longer afford to spurn the support of even a small section of the electorate. The total number of people traditionally engaged in work with precious metals (not gold alone) is less than one thousandth of the country's population. Many of them were admittedly faced with hardship and some 250 of them committed suicide because of the failure of the Government in rehabilitating them in other occupations after the imposition of the Gold Control Order. But it is not their suffering that the ruling party had primarily in mind when agreeing to relax the order. More important are the votes of the middle and upper class womenfolk with an insatiable lust for gold as well as the support of rich and powerful merchants who control Congress policies in diverse ways.

So the order, one of the few progressive measures introduced by Mr Morarji Desai during his term as Finance Minister, had to be virtually withdrawn. A motion seeking formal withdrawal of the order has, of course, been rejected by the Lok Sabha, but the measure of relaxation announced by the Prime Minister makes nonsense of any control. The official explanations and assurances are certainly not of 22-carat purity; the claim that the motive was not political is not even 14-carat. Not a single convincing reason has been given why the views and recommendations of the committee appointed to examine the working of the Gold Control Order have not even been seriously considered by the Government. Incidentally, why has the Finance Minister himself been so reticent about the reasoning behind the

modification of the order? After devaluation it was reported that the decision was not primarily his, but he gallantly defended it in public. Has he been equally passive in the course of decision-making over the gold control issue as well?

But Mr Chaudhuri is not really the passive type, at least not when dealing with matters which would normally be regarded as too minor to merit his attention. He may be reluctant to take the initiative in policy changes, but evidently not to save people from harassment by his officials. His concern for the uninterrupted peace of mind of honest people is altogether unexceptionable, but those with suspicious minds have been intrigued by the circumstances attending the first known expressions of this concern. He showed exceptional enterprise in ordering some of his subordinates to make amends to an old acquaintance (friend?) of his for the inconvenience they had caused him by searching his office and private residence. Apparently on Mr Chaudhuri's instruction, the investigating officers were also asked to submit an explanation for their action. Nobody could have been in doubt that no explanation would have satisfied the Finance Minister. The letter from his Ministry pre-judged the issue by saying that the information on which action had "obviously" been taken had come from a "person of very doubtful integrity" while the investigations affected a Calcutta firm of solicitors, from which Mr Chaudhuri during his successful career at the bar had received briefs and regular payments therefor. Is this the kind of basis which Mr Chaudhuri himself, if he were arguing in a court of law, would accept as satisfactory for Ministerial intervention in an official investigation? He has offered further explanation for his somewhat unusual conduct, but none which the public is likely to find even as good as 18-carat.

For NOW readers in Western India may contact

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And there still is the cruel reality that some men still believe in force.

L. B. Johnson

Left Unity

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THE unity talks among all parties in opposition to the Congress, including the Bangla Congress but with the exception of the PSP, seem to have begun well. This is evident from the joint statement issued in Calcutta on August 30 after the conference of 13 political parties, presided over by Mr Jyoti Basu. Dr P. C. Ghosh, former Chief Minister, Mr Ajay Mukherjee, former West Bengal Pradesh Congress President, and now President, Bangla Congress. Mr Jyoti Basu and leaders of 12 other parties declared that they would try to form "an alternative non-Congress popular Government" in West Bengal, by defeating the Congress in the next elections.

To achieve the objective, it was stated, every effort would be made to arrive at an electoral understanding on the basis of a programme with all parties and individuals agreeing to such a programme.

It is being said in all political circles that the leftist parties have advanced a step further than what had been reached at the Delhi conference on the approach to the general elections and formation of alternative Governments. The Delhi conference had said that the parties would approach the electorate on the basis of their own manifestoes and programmes. In West Bengal, the leftist parties, as would be evident from the statement, would face the electorate on the basis of a minimum programme.

The urge for unity in the background of the intense anti-Congress feeling and the need for a straight fight with the Congress is said to have dispelled reservations against the alliance, if there was any, among a few who attended Tuesday's talks. Dr P. C. Ghosh appears to have shed some of his misgivings about the alliance dominated by the Communists after the talks he had during the last one month or so with Bangla Congress leaders like Mr Mukherjee and Mr Jehangir Kabir and some trade union leaders of the West Bengal branch of the INTUC.

These leaders of the BPNTUC are said to have made up their minds to lend moral or other support to the alliance against the Congress. They

are well known for their anti-Atulya Ghosh views and had even gone to the extent of campaigning, though unsuccessfully, for dissociation of the INTUC from the Congress at the all-India conference of the INTUC some time ago.

Dr Ghosh and Mr Mukherjee are said to have pleaded forcefully for the association of the PSP with the left alliance and for a unified stand on the Chinese question: It is said that even on these issues the Left Communist Leader, Mr Jyoti Basu, was not lacking in an accommodating spirit. Mr Basu is said to have told the conference that they were opposed to the PSP being invited at the conference because the utterances of the party's all-India leaders indicated that the Communist Party, right or left, was the PSP's main enemy. But to those who had assembled on the day, the Congress was the main adversary.

On the demand that his party should clarify the stand on China and Pakistan, his point was that they should always be ready for a peaceful settlement. In the interests of the country, the Union Government, he said, should take the initiative of settling the issue with China. Their attitude was one of peaceful settlement with the neighbouring countries, but at the same time they would be ready to defend the country against aggression.

It was pointed out by the LSS leader, Mr Arun Ghosh, that they should spell out categorically what relief the people could expect in the event of the formation of an alternative Government which would have to function within limitations under the present circumstances.

The difference in regard to principles having been removed, the only obstacle now to a unified list of left candidates is adjustment of seats among different parties constituting the alliance. The bilateral talks initiated between different parties some time ago will now be conducted more purposefully so that by the middle of this month a clear picture might be available regarding adjustment of seats. The only guarantee against the failure of the talks is the anti-Congress feeling of the people who would like to inflict a crushing defeat on the Congress. It is being said that political parties can afford to ignore the popular sentiment only at their peril.

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No Rice or Wheat? Give Them Milo

BARUN DE

WHILE injunction to eat cake instead of bread may have caused revolutions in France, being forced to eat inferior millets in times of scarcity has never caused widespread peasant revolt in modern India. The alternatives are clear today, in the areas where scarcity prevails in West Bengal. If the crop is poor this year, no amount of American PL480 wheat will do the trick. The peasant has no way out but to eke out his minute, rice plus wheat, ration, with the milo that the Government is now giving him.

In January last year a noted foreign economist visited several villages to find out whether starvation conditions existed in villages within the radius of a hundred miles of certain selected provincial urban centres. It was his belief that, whereas rural poverty had not been eradicated in inaccessible parts of India, it would be more difficult to find complete poverty amounting to seasonal starvation in areas connected with the larger cities in India by means of roads and market networks. He believed he had found sufficient evidence to justify his belief that, in general, the availability of food and of the common amenities of life was increasing in India, not going down. This year he is trying to get back to similar villages and see what has happened within the intervening 18 months.

I accompanied him to two villages, which he had seen last year, near the road between Basirhat and Hasnabad in the northern part of 24-Parganas district, near the Pakistan border. We also stopped at a village on a side road between Habra and Basirhat.

The triangle which is bounded by Habra, Basirhat and Hasnabad grows two basic crops, jute and paddy. Some sugarcane is grown near Hasnabad. The roads are fairly good; the Jessore Road goes through the region, and side roads are in a state of fairly good repair. Just now, the wayside markets are full of bundles of jute for sale; vegetables also are being sold in these *hats*. A Sunday market near Habra was also full of

very lean undernourished cattle, presumably for sale. At present the fields have standing crops of jute, but not as much paddy. Very little sugar can be seen.

In a small village called Kumro near Habra some women were laying jute out in strips on the road, and soaking them in a pool beside it. A man told us that he was a local resident for many years, but the bulk of the village consisted of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan. Another man wandered along and said he was a refugee. He came from Sandeshkhali, which is not in Pakistan, but in 24-Parganas itself where at present, he said, there was *ghor ajanma* (severe drought). He had heard that people there were not getting anything to eat. He, however, had come from Sandeshkhali in 1956, because there had been nothing to eat that year. He had taken a little land from a local Muslim landowner, but as he had not had enough relatives to raise adequate crops he gave up the land and was now working in a road gang. The rate of wages for day labour around Kumro was Rs 2. There were many other refugees in the village from other parts of 24-Parganas.

Upset About Food

Most of the people who gathered around were very upset about food. Wheat rations were being cut down and they were being given milo. Mr Tarun Kanti Ghosh, the MLA for the locality, had come himself and asked them to eat milo, but it was so difficult to eat it that some people at the meeting, we were told, had even thrown shoes at him when he went on talking about milo. A man was told to run into a house and he brought out a handful of milo. Could it serve as a meal for any labourer, who had to go into the fields behind a plough at 5 in the morning and then work through the day? They felt that their vitality was at a low ebb. The crop condition was so bad that even women were being forced to work, earning a few rupees, by treating jute. This had been common, they said, for the

Muslim peasantry, but now even Hindu peasants were forced to send their women out to do this kind of work. Most of the children went to a nearby school. Would not education in the next generation improve the lot of these children? We asked. A rather tough-looking peasant, one of the few who had a shirt, retorted: what chance was there that the children would eat more than their fathers? Education could lead to prosperity if it was based on a full belly. Otherwise, it taught the peasant to leave the soil and join the ranks of the urban poor.

Most of their troubles would be solved, they thought, if the Government would only stop taxing them for about 9500 bighas of land outside the village, which was constantly waterlogged during the monsoon. This land had once an outlet (*khal*) to a nearby river, but the outlet had got silted and now a road went across the line of the outlet. If only the Government would dig the outlet once again and put a culvert for it under the road, the *beel* or tract of low-lying land which was liable to be flooded could be cultivated without danger or loss of crops. As it was, there was no security of getting a return from this land. When there was little rain, the waterlogging was much less and it was then that they could get some rice to eat. So, a partial failure of the monsoon was not unwelcome.

They had given up hope of the Government doing anything. An SDO from Barasat once came to Kumro and promised to see that the *khal* was dug. When nothing happened, a few wilder spirits took shovels and started digging the *khal* themselves, but then they realised that this would mean digging under the road, which was illegal. After all, the Government did not encourage them to build culverts by self-help. Some boys from the village had staged a *gherao* (noisy siege) round another SDO in Barasat the other day, in a last bid to present their specific problem to the Government. We asked them whether the Congress or the Communist Party

was interested in this matter. No, no party was interested. Election time was coming and the parties would come for votes. They were going to tell them that they first wanted to see the *khal* dug, and then they would vote for whichever party got it dug. No outlet canal, no vote.

Paschim Madhyampur

From Kumro we went to Paschim Madhyampur which is on the other side of Basirhat, southwards towards Hasnabad. Basirhat itself looked a flourishing place with large houses, a detachment of police encamped outside it in very clean tents, and thriving shops which advertised jute seeds and other necessities of the jute cultivator in placards in Bengali (unlike the Bengali transliterations of English notices so common in a larger commercial town like Burdwan). Along the road there was much work in progress on the jute fields.

Paschim Madhyampur is a large village stretching between the road and the railway line which runs from Basirhat to Hasnabad. One end of it is a furlong away from the station halt of Madhyampur and it is about two hours from Calcutta by train, and about $3\frac{1}{2}$ by bus. It had seemed to be in a flourishing condition in January last year. But the first man who came towards us could only talk about *their khal* which was now being dug, after much waver- ing by the Government; and about the harm that the milo ration was doing to his children. Almost every- one in his neighbourhood, he said, was suffering from a constant state of diarrhoea and old dysenteric troubles were beginning to reappear. A woman, "100 years old", said she had seen very bad times but now it was worse because by next year the chil- dren would begin to die. (We thought that this might be senile ex- aggeration). She could remember 1943 very well, but even in that year of famine the people with land had enough to give part of their stock to the poorer day labourers who worked for them. This had also been the case during the bad days of 1950. But none now seemed to have any stock to spare.

The day labourers were all con- cerned about milo. About the levy of foodgrains, they said if the Gov- ernment took away their food for better distribution, then this right

should be matched by the responsi- bility to supply them something which would sustain them, at least in the present months when they had to work the hardest in the year. Had milo been supplied in winter, they would not have minded. They had got used to wheat, though there were complaints when part of the first ration was given in wheat. But now they felt that the Government was really concerned with pushing them from rice to wheat, and from wheat to milo. Someone said that since milo was only a superior kind of re- sidue of grass, the progression would lead them soon to eat what the cattle ate. But they would have no com- plaints to make about the Govern- ment if they could get even two meals of wholesome stuff in the day.

Paschim Madhyampur is a predo- minantly Muslim village. Last year someone said that it was 90% Mus- lim. One of the Muslim inhabitants who used to hold five bighas of land was forced to sell it when the prices went up last year. Another family had two brick houses in the same compound with a tubewell. The males worked in Calcutta and one of them was a doctor. He lived in Cal- cutta and had a car. Another male member of the family came back on Sundays. This family seemed to be well educated and very precise in their information about the condi- tion of the village.

Our first informant told us that what was bothering them most was that they had no secure returns from the paddy that was cultivated in a very large *beel* on the other side of the railway line. A *khal* was to be dug to take the water away to the Burkunda river nearby. He thought that delays in digging this *khal* were due to the fact that people who were not interested in getting it dug were giving bribes to contractors employed by the Government to make the alignment of the *khal* in such a way that no water would be taken away from the *beel*. A member of the family of landholders said that it was *abantar katha* (useless talk) of bri- bery, since this was only a rumour and totally unsubstantiated. But, he said, the fact remained that about three to four thousand acres of land went completely under water by about August in a season of good rains. The *beel* comprised the lands of about ten villages in the region. There had been an old outlet canal,

now silted up. Some jotedars (which he said meant "influential people") who lived at the mouth of the area which was silted up were using all their influence to see that the outlet was not renovated. They had lower- ed the level of the ground nearby and were making a lot of money by catching fish in tanks, which would be dried up if the waterlogging was cured. In the last two or three years, as rising prices had begun to encom- pass Paschim Madhyampur, the vil- lagers had tried to force the jotedars to agree to the lowering of the level of the outlet. The latter had pro- tested, and there had been occasional *dangas* (turmoil and blows). This led to ill feeling between the jotedars and other villagers. There had been much bungling by the Government in the digging of the outlet canal, and the waterlogging still continued. All the problems of Paschim Ma- dhyampur would be over if *khovak* (rice to eat) was available from the *beel*. As it was, there was so little prospect of a good harvest this year that they were praying for a failure of the rains, since that would keep waterlogging down to a minimum, and they would get a moderate crop from the *beel*.

Even in this family, it was felt that the milo ration was affecting the health of the common labourers. They themselves had very little sur- plus money to buy good food. One of their most educated members had six children, and in hardship years there was little surplus of cash or rice to go around. However, they were trying their best to see that the children got a good education, there were so many more opportunities for good education nowadays. Our informant had studied in Ripon College in the 1940s, and could re- member reading history in the classes of Prof Hiren Mukerjee and Prof Bimala Prasad Mukherjee. He had felt that he owed it to his son that he should go to school, he had hoped to put the boy "into service" after he got through the Higher Secondary Examination. However, jobs were more difficult to get nowadays, and the boy was forced to go to Basirhat College, since the same jobs that were available 20 years ago to matriculates now required graduates. The boy told us that his village had been very prosperous and literate till the last two years, but the combination of rising prices, bad harvest and the

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waterlogging in the *beel* had brought down the standard of living considerably. His father was particularly upset that he could not offer visitors anything more than a *dab*, a *pan*, and a flower which he sent his daughter to pick. But mangoes are still plentiful in the mango season and the whole family repeatedly asked us to come back with our relatives then so that they could show us what mangoes were like in Paschim Madhyampur.

Sivrajpur

The village of Sivrajpur or, as its inhabitants pronounced it, Sheerajpur is further down the road on a side road to Hasnabad. It is on the other side of the Paschim Madhyampur *beel*, in which it has much land. Their basic problem was almost the same as that of Paschim Madhyampur. Get the outlet canal renovated, they said, and there will be a sufficient surplus of paddy to maintain them in the lean months. However, the village was completely different from Paschim Madhyampur in respect of economic status and spirit of the people.

Sheerajpur is also predominantly Muslim. It also produces jute and sugar as well as paddy, though the bulk of the cultivation is paddy and sugar. However, the one or two brick houses in the village are much smaller. No villager goes to Calcutta to work. Consequently, there is no inflow of urban income through people coming back on Sundays or cash remittance. Most of the children go to school at the free primary level, but in Sheerajpur there is so little labour available that as soon as boys are above the age of 10 or 11 they have to be put to work. The education they get is not worth the name, because they have to be utilised as village labour at the earliest possible age.

They say that they have never really grown enough paddy or jute to be able to make a profit out of cultivation, at the expense of their food and invest in tobacco in Hasnabad or Basirhat, which is brought home and rolled by hand into *bidis*. These are sold, particularly in two neighbouring markets, one of which is only a furlong away from the village. A rather curious thing we noticed was the incapacity—or it may have been unwillingness—of anyone to tell us the cost of tobacco or the

price of the *bidis*. What they did say was that *bidis* had practically not been made this year. There was no money to buy tobacco. How could they buy tobacco when they could not even buy wheat or rice and when milo was sapping their stamina?

If there were any prospects of a surplus of paddy this year, the coming of a good monsoon would in any case have waterlogged the *beel*. So their position boiled down to the building of the same *khal*, which the people of Paschim Madhyampur had also stressed as a prerequisite of prosperity for the entire region. As things were, the people were as lean here as those who beg in Calcutta in times of dearth, at the junction points of Rashbehari Avenue. The children were in a rather debilitated condition, and it was quite true that few people could eat much vegetable or fish. When we came away we were sped with the same dignified farewells, requests to come again at a better time and the hope that some news would go to the wider world about the delay in digging the *khal*. When we expressed the hope that next year would be a better year, one Muslim peasant said they were concerned with staying alive this year. Next year was too far away to worry about. He had earlier said that they themselves were to blame for their present plight. They should have been farsighted enough to save paddy from last year. They were learning foresight the hard way, but they might not remain alive long enough to teach it to their children.

Basic Problems

The picture that one derives in snippets, from talking at random in just a day, may be an exaggerated one. There were many inconsistencies in what we heard. But certain things were obvious. The rains have not been good enough to create hopes of a good harvest. All the villages classified the year as one of *ajanmā*, drought, scarcity, low productivity. In both Paschim Madhyampur and Sheerajpur this came on the back of two years of high food prices, and the camel's back was near to breaking. In all the villages we went to, there was one common local problem. Each had land in low-lying areas liable to waterlogging in the rainy season. In both *beels*, the outlets were silted, in one case because of the road alignment, and in the

other perhaps because of the building of the new railway line from Basirhat to Hasnabad. In both cases the Government had not shown any immediate interest in remedying the situation. In the one near Hasnabad, the situation was being utilised by the *jotedars* who also had the added advantage of control of the blocked outlet to raise fish, denying security of cultivation to the outlying villages. The future in each village was bounded by the non-existence of an irrigation drain and the neglect of the problem of irrigation management by the State. It is said that the problem of optimization of water resources is at last exercising the attention of the Agriculture Ministry. In these cases, optimization has broken down even in wet cultivation. I was reminded of the problem which Sarat Chandra's Village Hampden, Ramesh, faced many years ago in *Palli Samaj*. The history of rural Bengal takes very long to change.

In all villages the poorer *kamins* or day labourers harked wistfully back to the relatively "happy days" of the 1943 famine, or to the 1950 scarcity, which is fresher in their memory. In those days, said the villagers of the Hasnabad area, the *grihasthas* in the vicinity had enough surplus stock to help the poorer people at the height of scarcity. At present, the Government levy on foodgrains, by lowering wholesale food prices below the market level, had either made the *grihasthas* hoard their surplus and raise the black market price, or, in a few cases near the Basirhat jute market, acted as an incentive for the poorer peasantry to change their crop, this year, from paddy to jute. The levy thus acted as an incentive for the growth of cash crops at the expense of foodgrains. In all cases the scarcity meant the coming of milo to the villages, and this was obviously the main subject of talk. It is difficult to cook, even in sand in the form of *khoi* or *popcorn*, and it causes diarrhoea and in cases of weakness, accentuated dysentery. Such conditions create the base for beri-beri, or other epidemics which decimate the Bengali countryside far more than starvation ever can.

Excuses?

It may, of course, be said that milo is just an excuse for the poor pe-

NOW

sant to blame all his evils on the Government; that diarrhoea or dysenteric conditions are common in any case among under-nourished people in Bengal, and that bad water may have something to do with this as well; that their habit of eating millets without any other balancing diet cause stomach upsets; and that the peasantry show a natural tendency to exaggerate when they talk about their half-famished condition. However, all the people we talked to felt that there was a progression from bad to worse in the foodgrains they were being asked to eat, and that they would be prepared to accept even this, if the State showed any concern to improve the conditions of cultivation. In this tract, a breakdown had taken place in the traditional initiative which the State in India will always be expected to take in the maintenance of effective irrigation of paddy lands held by people of different villages. It was also obvious that the links between the gentry and the peasantry, the nexus that bound man and man in traditional Indian society, have begun to snap. In conditions of dearth, it is the peasantry who are hit hardest by the dissolution of traditional bonds.

It is well known that the current months of the year represent the dreaded lean period in West Bengal. As was pointed out in *Now* of August 19, "harrowing tales of distress in the countryside are coming in and the continuing drought superimposed on the food shortage has made the lean period even leaner than usual". A Calcutta daily recently published maps of rainfall figures in India for the last week of August, for the last four years. It is clear that behind the provincial bandh movements there lies a history of at least two years of rainfall deficit, and in some cases low rainfall for even four years.

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In these conditions, urban distress must be viewed in the broader context of agrarian breakdown in the countryside. Consequently, any programme of either reform or revolution must be based on the context of continuing scarcity and the present extraordinary contingency of drought. Those who believe that the situation can be solved piecemeal, village by village, will have to take note of the demand for irrigation reform, even in the wettest lands, and for the necessity to implement a grain procurement policy which keeps paddy out of the hands of people who, in very unambiguous language of the 18th century legislators, were called "engrossers and regraters", black-marketeers in general. However, only a thorough cleaning up of the processes of administration can lead to implementation of such reforms. If administration cannot be revitalised, the semi-starving peasantry will slowly begin to think of the possibilities of change inherent in revolution. It has been pointed out in the same issue of *Now* referred to above by Mr Nirad C. Chaudhuri that such a revolutionary potential might not come into existence "before the government of the country by the Congress has reduced the people to a state of abject degradation and barbarism, out of which no historical development will drag them out". In these circumstances, it may be possible for the forces of Fascism to rear their ugly heads before the more progressive revolutionary elements can organize themselves.

The least that the political parties or Government officials in the towns can do is to give greater attention to fact-finding about the feelings of villagers. If such feelings of despair exist, they can hardly lead to effective participation by the peasantry in improving the condition of the country. It is only fact-finding which can lead to a solution of the problems that plague the country, and fact-finding will have to be carried down to the lowest levels of agrarian society. It was the writings of *cahiers* by the French urban bourgeoisie which precipitated the agrarian revolution in 18th century France.

However, in India, the dissolution of the traditional nexus has led to greater poverty, through the intensification of State capitalism. The gentry can always in these conditions

resort to the black market and ask the common people to have fewer children. By the same token they can seek refuge from the grim situation in cynicism or in comparison of conditions in their own area with worse conditions in other areas or other centuries. The peasantry who work for Rs 60 a month or perhaps get only a little bit more if they have a bit of land have neither the education nor the savings to find solace in either cynicism or laughter. The tragedy is that only a very few of us in the towns really know how the peasantry live in times of scarcity. And even if we do know, there is nothing that we seem to be able to do to get out from the mazes of knowledge to the grassroots of constructive action.

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"Character Assassination"

OUTSIDER

OF all the expressions of hypocritical injured innocence, which is the mood par excellence of the Ministers of the Congress Party, the most naive is the wail about character assassination. And it certainly is strange that some newspapers columnists should exhibit the same simplicity, though not hypocritically. The weakness of the writers and their readers is that never having been in touch with real politics they do not know what its ordeals are. In fact, these ordeals are its necessary conditions, just as travail is of child-birth.

One of the greatest political figures of the world, Clemenceau, practised invective to a point which could be called character assassination, but he also preached it as against himself. When he became Prime Minister of France in 1917 in the darkest hour for France in the first World War, he did not take shelter behind the crisis to claim immunity for himself. He declared: "The right to slander the members of Government should be beyond all restraint." He would not have any security men either for his skin or his character. That was as it should always be. For a politician to say that he would not expose himself to abuse, even unjust, is like a military officer saying that he would not expose himself to bullets.

All history bears testimony to the statement I have just made. It began long before parliamentary government. I wonder if many people know the origin of the word 'libel'. It comes from the Latin word *libellus*, which means a little book. It was in such handwritten and widely circulated books that the partisans of the Senatorial order in ancient Rome gave expression to their animosity to the Emperors. Nearly all of the latter had calumnies spread against themselves. Even the women were not spared. Faustina, daughter of Antoninus Pius and wife of Marcus Aurelius, was so effectively slandered that even Gibbon wrote about her in this vein: "Faustina, the daughter of Pius and the wife of Marcus, has been as much celebrated for her gal-

lantries as for her beauty. The grave simplicity of the philosopher was ill calculated to engage her wanton levity, or to fix that unbounded passion for variety, which often discovered personal merit in the meanest of mankind. The Cupid of the ancients was, in general, a very sensual deity; and the amours of an empress, as they exact on her side the plainest of advances, are seldom susceptible of much sentiment."

The Empress Theodora, wife of Justinian, was vilified even more mercilessly. Gibbon describes her life as a courtesan before she became Justinian's wife: "Her venal charms were abandoned to a promiscuous crowd of citizens and strangers, of every rank and of every profession: the fortunate lover who had been promised a night of enjoyment was often driven from her bed by a stronger or more wealthy favourite." Of her life as an actress, Gibbon says that the satirical historian has not blushed to describe the naked scenes which Theodora was not ashamed to exhibit in the theatre. In the original historian the description is so atrociously obscene that Gibbon quotes it only in Greek.

Let me come down to modern times. Gladstone was subjected to blackmail on the score of cultivating prostitutes! During World War I Lord Haldane was abused as a pro-German, who had betrayed the British plans to the enemy. He had to be dropped from the Government. Some people, forgetting the dates of birth of the persons concerned, said that he was the illegitimate brother of Kaiser William II which would have made Princess Victoria, daughter of Queen Victoria, take a lover at the age of sixteen and two years before her own marriage with the Crown Prince of Germany.

There were numerous letters of protest against Lord Haldane's remaining in office. On one day, in response to an appeal in the *Daily Express*, there arrived at the House of Lords no less than 2600 hundred letters accusing him of disloyalty to the nation. These were sent to his

house, and Lord Haldane entrusted the opening of the sacks in which they were sent, the opening of the letters themselves, and their disposal, in the fireplace perhaps, to the kitchenmaid.

I give a very choice bit from the experiences of Mrs Asquith. In 1916 a move was on to get Mr Asquith out of his position as Prime Minister, and all sorts of reports were circulated. Some of these were told to Mrs Asquith herself by a pretty American who did not know her, in a train. After a reference to Asquith in the course of a conversation, the American lady said:

"I am told by people who are up in things that Asquith has made a fortune in Krupps, and that his daughter Elizabeth is engaged to be married to a German admiral."

"Dear me," replied Mrs Asquith, "how amazing! I never heard that Asquith, as you call him, was a rich man before."

American: "Oh! believe me, he's enormously rich; and his sympathies are entirely with the Germans—it seems so sad! But then, most people know it's not him at all, but his wife: her influence has ruined his career! She must be a terrible woman!"

Mrs. Asquith: "Do you know either of the Asquiths? because if you don't..."

American: "Why everybody knows Mrs Asquith! and she is so ugly!"

So on and so forth. Please read the whole of this most entertaining story in Mrs Asquith's autobiography (Vol. II, pp. 265 ff.).

Let me come to France, with which I began. Has any reader of *Now* heard of Leon Daudet, son of Ernest Daudet and the publicist of the *Action Française*? He was a genius in scandalous polemics.

After the great French disasters in 1917 he accused Malvy, the Minister of War, of treason, and above all of being the instrument of betrayal of the French military plans to the Germans. Poor Malvy had to resign, and after that he asked to be tried by the Senate sitting as a High Court. He was charged with treason, but as the charge could not be sustained, with a disregard of law which shocked jurists, he was condemned for malfeasance in office, and sentenced to five years' banishment. He did not squeal about character assassination.

And here in India who are the people who are squealing? The men against whom all sorts of accusations of the worst sort are being made without either being made explicit or being disproved. There is a continuous stream of revelations about the shady relations of the members of the Government with big business in

India, without the public being able to decide how much is true and how much false. The underworld in which big business and the Government meet gives the queerest possible sensation. There seems to be a world of spectres enveloping our ordinary existence, and one has the feel of a haunted house.

Calcutta Diary

A.M.

IT is going to be an unquiet September. About everybody was marching towards Esplanade West: goldsmiths (until a few days ago), non-teaching college staff, university and college teachers, students, teachers of primary and secondary schools, non-gazetted government employees, truck drivers, housewives. Station Masters went on hunger-strike for a day. Even for West Bengal, such a convergence of discontent is altogether unprecedented. How has it come about that Bengali housewives—long-suffering, frail, timid in all seasons—now feel like giving vent to violent emotions? The other day one was delivering an ominous soliloquy in a South Calcutta market. She was lamenting that there was no terrorist movement: 'If only Khudiram were around, if only there were a couple of Benoy Boses and Kamakhya Roys amongst the presentday Bengali youth....'

Outside this State, there will be vehement disapproval of such sentiments, even if they are prompted by the prevailing anarchy in commodity prices. So typical of the Bengalis, one can almost visualise the wise nodding of heads, this romantic harking back to the past, a subliminal manifestation of the impotence-induced guilt. All responsible political parties of the Left will also recoil in horror if confronted with the train of thought started by the lady. But what is still intriguing is the sociological phenomenon of this sudden alienation of the people of this State from the Congress party. This alienation seems about as complete as the one that occurred between the Indian people and the British rulers thirty or forty years ago. After all, the Congress had obtained 47 per

cent of the votes in this State in the general elections held as late as March 1962. The elections were followed by two successive armed clashes with foreign Powers which ought to have enhanced—and they did, temporarily—the political prestige of the ruling party vis-a-vis the Opposition groups. The earlier of the two clashes—the one in which we fared worse—was with a nation which, for purposes of political propaganda, could be linked with the major Opposition party in West Bengal. The bosses of the ruling party were not at all chary of taking advantage of this either. Apart from the severe repression launched by the authorities, Mr Atulya Ghosh and his followers did try to ostracise the Left Communists socially and politically following the 1962 warfare. And in this Mr Ghosh did receive considerable assistance from some other political parties. The ruling party could bask in the reflected glory of the war with Pakistan too. The huge meeting organised by the authorities to welcome the 'victorious' Lal Bahadur Shastri in Calcutta last November was, for all practical purposes, a victory celebration of the Congress party.

The Congress, let me repeat, received more than 47 per cent of the valid votes cast in the State in the last general elections. Even allowing a certain margin for corruption and intimidation, five years ago at least two-fifths of the electorate favoured the party, and it will not be at all surprising if claims are made that there was a further accretion of strength in the aftermath of the China and Pakistan wars. Moreover, Mr Atulya Ghosh, with his considerable organising talents, has always tried to maintain the links of the party or-

ganisation with the *mofussil* and the rural areas. By no means can it be said that the Congress party in the States consists exclusively of city slicks. A vast majority of the party functionaries and MLAs represent small traders, middle peasants, jotedars and aratdars. These people know the countryside, and should have been able to warn Prafulla Babu and Atulya Babu that serious trouble was broiling. But this particular line of communications did not work, or, assuming it did, the force of circumstances was such that nothing could be done to forestall the breakdown of relations between the community and the Government. The other line of communications, via the administrative apparatus, proved an equally bad conductor of public emotions.

Why did the debacle take place? How did this astonishing situation come about that, in course of a brief six or eight months, peasants and government pension-earners, factory hands and middle-class gentlefolk, teachers and artisans, intellectuals and petty traders find themselves unified in their dislike of the Congress? It could not be all on account of the difficult food situation and the spiralling of prices. Although the present crisis in food supply is the most serious since Independence, we have experienced difficult years earlier, for example, in 1948-49, 1950-51 and 1957-58. The food movement in West Bengal in 1959, which claimed 80 victims, was a more bloody affair. What sets apart the present movement is that, all of a sudden, the Congress has lost its image and 'credibility'. There are now mutterings from people from all walks of life that enough is enough. One can of course list any number of individual contributory factors to the general sense of hostility, such as disgust at the blatant emphasis on short-term class interests which stood in the way of putting into operation any successful food policy, or the fast-gaining belief that, under Congress auspices, nepotism and corruption are not only condoned but encouraged. But, overriding the other elements is the by-now firm suspicion that, whatever the emergency, however much the strains and difficulties experienced by the people, the Congress machinery simply does not care; it could not be bothered if you are without food or education or water, all that it is in-

interested in is your vote at the end of every five years.

Much of the evidence being given before the official enquiry commission on the disturbances earlier this year indicates that the authorities were aware about the food shortage and the resultant hardship of the people in many areas, alarms were sounded by local officials, but hardly any steps were taken to stave off the crisis. There was no impetuous rushing of rations. The administration continued to exist in a state of mindlessness. It still does. Fish and meat prices have plummeted since the lifting of controls; but it is none of the authorities' business to curb the racketeering. Work in private colleges came to a stop from the middle of August on account of the failure to meet the demands of the non-teaching staff. The State Education Minister had the temerity to plead that nothing could be done about this. Goods traffic came to a standstill with the strike of the truck-drivers; supplies in the city are running short; apparently nobody cares.

The impression is spreading that atrophy has taken over, administration in the State has about ceased to exist, its only manifestation being an occasional show at maintaining law and order. If there has not been a total collapse of the economy, it is because of the inertia of the system. There is quasi-anarchy. It could be the euthanasia of the Congress, although between now and the general elections next year, there could be an abrupt resuscitation of life. And it is perfectly possible for the Opposition parties to blow the elections through their own folly. But the mood of the people seems to suggest that at least hypocrisy has run its full course.

Prohibition, for instance. I heard an ex-Rajyapal of a State, where prohibition is supposed to be very strictly enforced, narrate how important people in the Congress hierarchy hit upon ingenuous ways to circumvent the liquor laws. One of his stories concerned a short tour of duty which an ADC organised for edification of the Rajyapal. The two of them, both in mufti, got into a private car and drove out to the intersection just outside Raj Bhavan, where a policeman, poised on a wooden platform, was regulating traffic. The

ADC made a hand sign, the policeman alighted from his pedestal, crouched, moved one wooden plank of the platform, brought out a bottle of whiskey, and walked towards the car. There could be no question of meeting out any punishment, the Rajyapal was told, for the policeman was the State Finance Minister's regular supplier.

Thanks to, the intra-mural episode between the coy Mr Nanda and *The Statesman* the air continues to be thick with innuendoes of impending events of sabotage, subversion and insurrection. Here is a free tip for the would-be insurrectionists, whoever they may be. All they have to do to take over Calcutta, without triggering a shot, is to choose a day on which either the President or the Prime Minister is visiting Calcutta. Their first move should be to capture Akashvani Bhavan, for example, approximately about the time the dignitary's plane is landing at Dum Dum. There will

be nobody to offer any resistance; the police and the army will be away at the airport and its approaches receiving Dr Radhakrishnan or Mrs Gandhi, as the case may be. On the evening of August 3 a Government truck carrying foodgrains to a Calcutta suburb had a breakdown, and officials started telephoning various police stations requesting an armed escort so that the food could be removed to safety. The beseeching was altogether fruitless, for not one senior officer was available at any of the police stations, everybody was away on duty at Dum Dum to receive the President. The subordinates mounting the telephones could not make one move without orders from 'responsible officers', who were unlikely to be back till late in the evening. After all, priorities cannot be disturbed: receiving the President is more important than guarding precious foodgrains—or preventing a robbery or, for the matter, an insurrection.

Congress And Muslim League In Kerala

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

IN the normal course, the Congress should have written the Muslim League off as an election ally in Kerala after the latter had announced at its Madras conference not to have any alliance with the Congress. When Congress leaders spoke of going it alone in Kerala in 1967, it did impress some. But when the Muslim League moved close to the Left Communists in Kerala, and the Right Communists this time decided to accommodate the Muslim League in the united front, thus changing their 1965 stand, the Congress leadership was in jitters.

This is not, however, everything. The Congress still thinks that the Muslim masses of Kerala, whom it had lost for ever, could be pawns in the game. The attempt now is to divide the Muslim League on the issue of an alliance with the Left Communist-led front. At the Bombay AICC session, there was a top-level meeting of Kerala delegates, the

Prime Minister, the Congress President and others and it was decided that Mr Fakhruddin Ahmed should go to Kerala on a political mission—to wean the League away from the Communists even if it could not be won over entirely to the Congress. But the attempt was a little too late in the day. Mr Fakhruddin Ahmed, who went there to study irrigation problems, also met over a hundred Muslim leaders, mostly those who did not belong to the League but had backed it in the past. His report to Mr Kamaraj, on July 5 in the form of a letter, makes interesting reading and provides an insight into the Congress strategy. It is clear the Congress now considers the Muslims a strategic section in Kerala and States like Uttar Pradesh. The Congress attitude to the Muslim minority in the past has been out of alignment with its professed secularism and now that the Muslim masses in Kerala have moved away from the Congress

and the Muslim League has lost ground to the Left Communists, the Congress is shocked and feels outwitted.

The Malabar region in Kerala is the stronghold of the Muslim League. In the 1965 mid-term poll, the Left Communists, the SSP and the Muslim League together liquidated the Congress there capturing all but two of the 48 seats.

There are 30 lakh Muslims in Kerala, which has a population of 180 lakhs. In the regional sense, the League has an organisation only in the Malabar area but its electoral successes there have not been very striking. In 1958, the League got 8 seats in alliance with the Congress and the PSP. In 1965, it got six seats though it fielded 16 official candidates. The Left Communist captured as many as nine of the ten other seats the League had contested. The Muslim League's unofficial understanding with the Left Communists related to seats where the League had set up "Independents" against the Congress. The League Independents secured five of these seats. The drop in the League vote in 1965 cost the party its status as a State party and its election symbol. So during Mr Fakhruddin Ahmed's visit, it was sought to impress upon the supporters of the League that an alliance with the Left Communists would prove the undoing of the League and that the League's alliance with them in 1965 was the "first wrong step."

Support For Communists

It would be well to quote certain passages from Mr Ahmed's report to Mr Kamaraj. "The support of the Muslim masses of Malabar area for the Muslim League is neither based on any basic principle nor derived from its continuous contact with the people but is solely obtained from the exploitation of religious susceptibilities of Muslims, with the help of 'fatwas' obtained from local religious leaders, at the time of election. Unlike the Congress and the Muslim League, Communists, on the other hand, have continuously kept contact with the Muslim masses even after the elections, with the result that a large number of Muslims have now become Communist members and supporters. The Muslim League has inadvertently fast yielded its influence over the Muslim masses in this area to the Communists and late

awareness of this by the League has now driven them to seek election alliance with the Communists lest they should completely be wiped out."

Another quote: "The Congress alliance with the League in 1960 has lowered the prestige of the Congress. Many have expressed the view that the Communists were found more sincere, honest and helpful in honouring the agreements, in protecting the rights of minorities and in giving fair and equitable treatment to them than the local Congress. In support of this, the smooth working of the League-Communist alliance in municipal administrations, particularly at Calicut, was cited.

Mr Ahmed feels that the Congress could still retrieve its hold over the Muslim masses in the Malabar area by removing or taking action to remove the legitimate grievances of these people and by approaching the people direct to "dissuade them from accepting the mischievous propaganda indulged in by the League and the Communists."

"I have already had occasions to point out that not only to bring a shift in the attitude of the Muslims in Kerala but also to continue to get support of Muslims elsewhere, it is imperative that immediate action should be taken for recognition of Urdu in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi, for tackling the Aligarh University affairs and setting up a Board to look into, and give redress wherever necessary, the grievances of minorities including the Muslims."

A change in the Congress heart in relation to the Muslim minority is too much to expect. But it is a fair guess that the Congress would now turn its attention to the Muslims in Kerala if only because Muslim support for the Communists would mean that the Congress has lost Kerala for ever. Now, the Muslim League can win about 10 of the 48 Assembly seats in the Malabar area (in a House of 133) and can be a decisive factor in 25 of the remaining seats in Malabar. So the Congress would stand to gain something by dividing the League even if it cannot do anything for the Muslims. Of a large number of grievances among the Muslims, Mr Fakhruddin Ahmed lists a few in his report:

Grievances

"a. discontinuance of public

holiday on Prophet's Birthday.

"b. discontinuance of reservation of seats for backward communities in the various educational institutions due to the acceptance of the Kumara Pillai Commission report. It was stated in this connection that from the point of view of literacy, Kerala was the most advanced State but this did not apply so far as the Muslims, particularly in Malabar, were concerned. It was stated that since now Muslims were overcoming their narrow-mindedness by sending their children to educational institutions, the difficulty was created by doing away with the reservation they had hitherto enjoyed....

"c. inadequate representation of Muslims in services and committees at all levels including local bodies and corporations

"d. Muslim representative, if any nominated to local committees, was taken from the fold of Muslim League ignoring the claims not only of Congress Muslims but other deserving Muslims not members or attached to any party.

"e. unequal treatment meted out to Muslims in respect of loans and licences for the industry.

"f. the deteriorating economic situation of Muslims throughout the country due to their unemployment because of inadequate representation in services at all levels and inadequate financial help through loans to enable them to take to industries either individually or through co-operatives.

"g. failure to give recognition to Urdu as a regional language in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi

"h. failure to settle Aligarh Muslim University matters

"i. Muslims and particularly those from Kerala not having adequate representation in high offices like the High Court Judges, Governors, Ambassadors, etc. and in different statutory committees and boards set up by the State or Central Government

"j. detention of a large number of Muslims all over India under DIR during the conflict with Pakistan without proper scrutiny, having no material against them or any prejudicial activity against the security of the country. It was pointed out that while detentions caused harassment, annoyance and great inconvenience to Muslims, it

also provided opportunities to unscrupulous officers for indulging in corruption

"k. failure to provide security of life and property of Muslims at the time of communal riots in many parts of India

"l. failure to evict illegal occupants of wakf properties, mosques and other properties of Muslims during disturbances after partition

"m. inadequate representation of Muslims in Government and Legislature in many of the States and in Parliament"

Delhi Letter

A Touch Of Mink...

From A Political Correspondent

AFTER the bad buffeting it took in Parliament this monsoon session, the Congress Parliamentary Party is a shadowy, unreal thing, unsure of itself. It was true, as the Prime Minister said, the attacks came from all fronts, in Parliament and outside. But even the Congress MPs were left cold when she told them that the attacks appeared to be an act of desperation on the part of the Opposition parties frustrated on the eve of the elections. If she thought the Congress benches could hit back at the Opposition, she was in for a shock. Congress members did try to be belligerent but their aggressive postures betrayed a certain lack of conviction.

In the Rajya Sabha, where there was a touch of mink, the Congress tried the privilege weapon against the Opposition only to realise that it could boomerang. The Opposition won hands down. But if Mr Bhupesh Gupta had not intervened to pull the Congress out of the mess, the matter would have taken another course.

After the Congress entered the phase of half-hearted belligerence in both the Houses, its performance has been worse. Mr Madhu Limaye cornered Mr Sachin Chaudhuri on the Orr Dignam affair and the Central Hall was agog with rumours that the Minister had decided to quit. But the same evening Mr Chaudhuri is reported to have told a group of Bengali correspondents that he would not go until he was thrown out.

At the week's end came the real high drama, the Opposition nearly getting Mr Atulya Ghosh. Whatever the Speaker's ruling on the privilege issue, certain revelations made by the Opposition did little to enhance the Congress prestige. Congress members tried to shout and outshout the Opposition but the fact that the statement made by Mr Ghosh under Rule 357 (which does not permit any controversial or debatable statement) became a subject of controversy later showed the Congress benches in very poor light.

So with three days left for the session to end, the Congress MPs wait with their fingers crossed, wondering who would be the next target of the Opposition. And between now and the winter session, how many more scandals are likely to be unearthed by the Opposition?

Too Many Skeletons

The fact is, one by one, the Congress chickens are coming home to roost and it is an accident that so many controversial issues came to be packed into a single session. There are aggrieved elements everywhere who readily pass on tell-tale documents or photostats to MPs. There is no longer any excitement in Parliament when Mr Limaye or someone else flourishes a document ominously and places it on the table of the House. There are too many skeletons in the Congress cupboard and several Ministers are praying they do not figure in a controversy.

The session is remarkable for one thing—the total collapse of the Treasury benches in the face of the Opposition onslaught. Congress MPs blame the Ministers, with some justification, because there was no unified effort on the part of the Cabinet to defend the Government or the Cabinet. Three Ministers turned down requests for defending Mr Subramaniam and Mr Chagla made it clear he would do it only in his House. When this is the position in the Cabinet, the MPs could hardly be expected to make an impressive contribution. In the Rajya Sabha debate on the PAC report, the party tried to block two of its members, Mr Chandrasekhar and Mr M. P. Bhargava, from speaking because both of them have been very critical of the Government and were instrumental in raking up the issue. Mr Chandrasekhar managed to speak but not Mr Bhargava. In

the Lok Sabha, the Congress could not put up good speakers because the members were just indifferent and did not want to be forced into embarrassing situations. The members from the South on the Congress side have been rather cold to the Ministers and even Mr Subramaniam could not find a single supporter from his home State.

Racket-busting aside, the political defeat of the Congress party is astounding. In the no-confidence debate, the Government could not give a single convincing argument in favour of devaluation. In the Public Accounts Committee report debate, it was proved that the Prime Minister's main anxiety was to save the Food Minister because it had become an issue between the Congress and the Opposition while in fact it was an issue between the House and the Government. On at least three issues, the Speaker remarked that there might be serious lapses but these lapses did not attract privilege. The Government has won on technical points all the time but not on moral or political counts. This is behind the overwhelming sense of frustration among the Congress MPs. But in an election year, the MP has to watch every step, if he has eye on the party ticket.

The Prime Minister has never been a parliamentarian of any experience and the short spell in the Rajya Sabha before she became the Prime Minister hardly provided her an opportunity to learn the ropes. But her performance during the session has been hardly impressive. It was amateurish in the least. In the Rajya Sabha she made up for her poor performance in the Lok Sabha by her invectives, but that achieved little.

Another feature of the session was the emergence of Mr Madhu Limaye as a parliamentarian of great promise. Already, the Congress is planning to concentrate on his constituency to keep him out of the House in 1967. The functioning of the SSP as a group in the House is far from impressive. Mr Limaye owes his success to his own hard work and perseverance. Until he proved it, the Opposition did not know that the privilege motion as a weapon could erode the Government's confidence in itself and force the Ministers into one faux pas after another.

The Left Communists returned during the last session, in May, but

are yet to make an impact in Parliament. They have been virtually sidelined by the Right Communists who have on several issues functioned in rare tandem with the Samyukta Socialists.

The War Scare

Does the Government expect a Pakistani attack or not? Mr Y. B. Chavan has been speaking on such varying wavelengths that one does not know what it all means. But the US Ambassador, Mr Chester Bowles, called at the External Affairs Ministry to tell India that the US Administration does not like the kind of stories correspondents taken on sponsored trips are filing. So it has turned out to be a bit of "defensive" reporting on the Kutch border. Both the Indian agencies and a couple of foreign agencies were represented on the trip and the Indian correspondents were content to report that there are no signs of the Pakistani army on our side of Kutch except for empty toothpaste tubes and tins cans littering the place, remnants left behind by our jawans who pulled out last year. It is puzzling, how they remained where they were all these months. But what is significant is that there was a conscious effort not to play up the reported Pakistani build-up on the other side.

Mr Bowles made it clear to India that the lobby in the US Congress which is against arms aid resumption to both India and Pakistan would take advantage of the scare reports in the Indian and Pakistani Press to thwart resumption attempts. In the bargain, both would lose. Already, the US military aid mission in New Delhi is on the point of shutting shop because it has no work. Unless military aid to Pakistan is resumed it would have to go.

The Government's attempt to play down Bonn's role in the Ottawa-Bonn-Teheran axis is becoming too obvious. The Government did not like to publicise Bonn's role but Bonn is getting tough after the Moscow communique mentioning two Germanys. India is not in a position to repudiate US military aid, and possibly similar aid from Bonn if it is forthcoming.

September 4, 1966

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The Press

Too Many Brickbats

COMMENTATOR

IF the Planning Commission had expected that Press reaction to the draft outline of the Fourth Plan would be favourable, it must have been thoroughly disillusioned by now. Not a single paper is enthusiastic over the hopes and promises of the Commission. Basing their judgment on past experience, all of them have doubted that the actual performance would not match the professions. The reasons are not the same; they cannot be, for every paper has examined the draft in the context of its own policy. All of them have dismissed the assessment of available resources as unrealistic, though for different reasons. The ideological battle has been generally kept in the background; only a few have referred to the perennial debate over the public and the private sector.

Looking at the draft plan from two diametrically opposite positions *The Hindustan Times* and *Patriot* have come out as the two bitterest critics. The former says the document bristles with equivocations, tries blindly to accommodate contradictory objectives, disingenuously uses emotionally loaded expressions and is generally lacking in candour. Setting out to "expose" these deficiencies the paper says the basic task that the draft outline has consistently evaded is testing its every target and every anticipation in the light of the performance of the last fifteen years. The projections of the draft are even more weirdly unreal. Neither past experience nor the objective situation—the posture of some of our neighbours, for example—offers the slightest evidence that the figure of available surpluses from current revenues has been arrived at on any appreciation of probabilities. The same air of "statistical Micawberism" pervades the projection of surpluses from public sector undertakings and of public borrowing, not to mention anticipations about the flow of foreign private capital to supplement savings available for the private sector investment. A plan of action, to deserve the name, should confront aspirations and needs with what is practi-

cal and not be just a perspective plan cut down to shorter time schedule. The draft outline looks very much like a perfunctory attempt at the second type of exercise.

Patriot, which is as staunch a champion of the public sector as the other paper is of the private sector, complains of a strong smell of election propaganda in the admissions and decisions of the Planning Commission. The first three Plans have taught the people, and should have taught the Government, that there is no half-way house between capitalist chaos and honest socialist planning. Efforts to interpret what is called a "mixed economy" as an inevitable point of rest between an old order and a new one have led the country nowhere. If the prescribed direction is towards a "socialist society" all economic movement has to be guided by a "socialist State". This truth has not yet been admitted, and the Fourth Plan's hesitation to do so, rather than the "florid talk" about taxing inequalities out of existence is its most noticeable characteristic. The Fourth Plan will continue to benefit the monopolist and the black-money tycoon, as the Second and the Third did, as long as the State does not boldly assume control of all economic levers.

According to *The Times of India*, the document is far better at defining the problems and fixing the goals than at indicating how precisely they are to be reached in the present political context. It hopes for the best whether in estimating the resources that are likely to be available for development or in measuring the effort that is likely to be made in gearing the administration for new tasks and in enforcing new norms of efficiency and austerity. Past experience is by no means reassuring that the Government will be able to enforce new restraints and disciplines at every level. The outline takes shelter in platitudes when it comes to defining the precise means by which the inflationary danger is to be avoided. A general advice regarding the desirability of a selective use of physical controls and State trading or a variety of

monetary and fiscal measures can be of little avail in the present situation. The need is to spell out here and now the precise action which has to be taken to keep prices in check. It is nearly three months since the rupee was devalued leading to a visible increase in the pressure on prices. Surely the planners cannot say that they have not had the time to consider this problem in all its bearings. The paper says that if there has been a woeful gap all these years between the formulation and implementation of plan programmes it is because the Government has consistently failed to organise the community for the requisite effort. It is as much a political as an economic challenge. It, however, sees a new sense of realism in the priorities given, for the first time, to agriculture and family planning.

The Indian Express is encouraged by the fact that the greatest emphasis in the Fourth Plan is on agricultural programmes and supply of the relevant inputs. Two other satisfactory features of the draft outline are that projects which have already made substantial progress will be completed as quickly as possible, and no new project will be started until it has been worked out in every detail. "But the draft outline has features over which it is not easy to show enthusiasm". Among these are questions of additional mobilisation of domestic resources and realisations from taxation and borrowings. The paper finds it equally difficult to take at its face value the assurance that while many of the difficulties of the Third Plan arose out of deficiencies in administration and implementation, things will be different during the Fourth Plan period. It is good to hear that steps will be taken to establish responsibility for action, ensure accountability and judge by performance. All this will, however, be generally regarded as just "tall talk", until the contrary is proved. For several months to come all leaders, politicians and even administrators, will be preoccupied with the elections. It remains to be seen, therefore, how the Government proposes to go about this business of securing the most efficient implementation of the Fourth Plan.

U.P. Ordinance

Commenting on the Ordinance promulgated in Uttar Pradesh em-

powering the State Government to ban labour agitations in certain essential public services *The Hindustan Times* says the measure is clearly in answer to the renewed talk of waging a struggle on the dearness allowance issue indulged in freely by its employees' unions. Doubts are bound to be raised within and outside the State about whether the threat posed by Government employees is serious and imminent enough to justify the Government's extraordinary response and whether it could not be effectively met within the framework of normal laws. At the same time, the paper asks the Leftist Opposition, "ever willing to turn public grievances to its own political advantage", realise that its tactics can only force the Government's hand to take recourse to extraordinary remedies. It is in no one's interest that unusual precedents be set up to deal with the threat of labour agitation in such a usually disciplined community as the Government's own labour force. The paper hopes that although the Government has placed the ordinance on the statute book and assumed such wide powers as those of arrest without warrant, the Opposition will make it unnecessary for the Government to resort to the ordinance and the Government will not be tempted to resort to it because it is there.

The Statesman is critical of the ordinance mainly because of its blanket extension to educational institutions. It does not doubt that the spirit of disorder has been mounting therein for some time past. But it is doubtful if general application of special powers is the right answer, for their practical effect may at best be marginal. When hundreds of teachers or thousands of students go on strike it is virtually impossible to punish each one of them. But punishment is more particularly hindered when strikes and worse are incited by powerful political groups, in office or very near it, as is the case in U.P. It is not obvious from the record that it is lack of powers which has stood in the past in the organised student delinquency. The way of firm official action against ordinance also raises the fundamental issue of discrimination. The right of those who work in Government offices may be questionable since they are part of the administration and subject to certain rules of conduct; but there is obviously no reason why

employees of public sector undertakings and workers in the private sector should not be treated alike.

Readers of more than one newspaper must have been perplexed by the headlines on the Bombay bandh. The headlines were so divergent that the bandh appeared to have been a success and a failure at the same time. "Poor response to Bandh call", said *The Hindustan Times*, but the Bombay edition of *The Indian Express* declared: "Bandh a success" latter however justified the police firing when it said, "Mob violence leads to firing twice". *Patriot* attributed "total success" for the bandh to its organisers, though it reported that "Bombay is paralysed". The headlines in the Delhi edition of *The Statesman* and *The Hindu* said that there were "stray cases of stone-throwing", but the latter claimed that the firing was on "bandh mob". The Bombay edition of *The Times of India* did not mention in its headlines that the police had fired. They merely said: "41 hurt in Bombay Bandh incidents; Life in city, suburbs disrupted". The plainest headline was in the Calcutta edition of *The Statesman*: "Police fire twice during Bombay Bandh".

Chaturmukh's Sandesh

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

OF the innumerable plays belonging to the early-twentieth-century 'problem-play genre', Milne's *Mr Pim Passes By* (written nearly 50 years ago) is among the few which even today retain some charm for the reader. A socio-moral question (whether the heart or the State and the Church should dominate in matters marital) is at the centre of *Mr Pim*, but actually, what saves it from being struck off the menu is a delicate, almost ethereal, playfulness with which Milne blends the eeriness of atmosphere, the movement of a James Bond story and the solemnity of a social problem into one charming little masterpiece.

Mr Asim Chakravarti has done well to adapt this masterpiece into Bengali and direct it for Chaturmukh. The production scheme in general is laudable in spite of the rather slovenly decor and some horrible acting of one or two in the company. Juthika



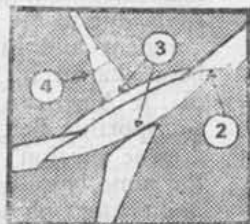
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Bhattacharjee's pleasing appearance cannot compensate for the irritation which she causes by rolling off her words with such rapid rattle. Asim Chakravarti acts with such gusto as to make us almost love him. But one wonders why he strives after extra-effects and, to score his points, writhe and blink and blare so much! The young artist, Saibal, is beyond redemption. When all is said and done, it must be admitted that the scheme after all has clicked. If Mr Chakravarti could give his actors some polish and if the whole thing could be conceived in lesser naivete and in greater sophistication, *Sandesh* might very well be one of the notable attractions of the season.

A Revival

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

ABOUT six months back, when Rupakar decided to set aside its 'golden-egg productions' (*Byapika Bidaya* and *Chalachittachanchari*) in favour of Tagore's *Achalayatan*, every theatre-lover in Calcutta felt curious and somewhat relieved. The forthcoming production was to be directed by Sabitabrata Dutta; Mr Balsara was to look after the music, and Tapas Sen was to construct the set, clothe the characters and illuminate the show. The expectations were understandably great. But the things did not quite come off: the diverse elements were evidently at war with each other, resulting in confusion rather than fusion.

Last week when *Achalayatan* was staged once more, the production looked a new one, and a distinctly superior one for that matter. A number of roles have been competently replaced; the inconsistencies of the costumes and some of the props have been righted; the lighting-scheme no longer betrays narcissism; the understanding of Gita Dutta and Sabitabrata Dutta has ripened into very sensitive acting. But for the songs (which without intensifying the moods and moments bring about a sharp fall in the dramatic tension) and immature acting of Dadathakur, the revival is really worth taking note of. Rupakar deserves thanks for this reorientation of *Achalayatan*.

Amorous Medicos And Doomsday

BY A FILM CRITIC

A fairly interesting pre-credit sequence, in Ken Hughes' *Of Human Bondage*, (Metro) of a group of schoolboys ragging their new mate, Philip Carey, an unfortunate boy with a clubfoot, indeed holds out prospects of good things coming in its wake. But the promise is never fulfilled and the film degenerates into a sloppy, sentimental tale about the hopeless love-affair of Philip Carey, a young medical student, with Mildred Rogers, a sluttish tea-room waitress. The story develops by fits and starts, many characters come in and disappear without rhyme or reason, the motivation and the relationships of the chief protagonists remain blissfully vague. Why is Carey so fatally attached to Mildred even when she has sunk to the lowest depths of moral degradation? Is it love, or the innate yearning of a deformed man for motherly care and affection, or the desire to play the father-figure, the redeemer of human these questions. Some ambiguous half-utterances about the strength of human bondage sound like mere shibboleths. The chief trouble with the film is that Hughes has tried to pack all the nuances of Maugham's original into the film's structure without caring to do away with a novel's necessary digressions and diversions. While the camera work is generally slick and the sets breathe a feeling for the locale, the direction is uninventively static, and the principal players, thoroughly unequal to their tasks, bring tragedy down to the level of melodrama or pathos.

Sesh Tin Din

Sesh Tin Din, Prafulla Chakrabarty's disastrous foray into a *Dr Strangelove*-type fantasy about the end of the world, suffers from a similar lack of sense of balance. Added to it are the general shoddiness, patchy scriptwork and an overall lack of taste. The director (who had years ago made *Durlav Janam*, a modest, unpretentious, honest film on the down-and-out) had an exciting situation out of which any imaginative film-maker might have made a master-

piece. But as Prafulla Chakrabarty is no Kubrick, he has made a mess of the whole thing. The hero's dream about the impending doom of the world, to be brought about by the pilots of the plane in which he is travelling, carrying nuclear bombs and the picture of a tense, confused, chaotic and panicky world on the brink of destruction, offer really challenging material to a creative filmmaker. But here the direction is aimless and the script is a basket of petty catchwords. As a result, the mass hysteria and the nightmarish horror of the approaching calamity are never portrayed effectively and the film looks like a gallery of adolescent pamphleteers blabbering out half-baked homilies on world peace, international solidarity and social justice.

Book Review

MILITARY ALLIANCES AND NEUTRALITY IN WAR AND PEACE

By Subrata Roy Chowdhury
Orient Longmans Rs 20

MILITARY alliances in recent times are undergoing a shake-up for a variety of reasons. The East-West detente, the Sino-Soviet schism, the *embourgeoisment* of Soviet society or if you prefer, the fact that the Soviet Union is becoming a satiated or status-quo Power and the softening attitude to international Communism (I have in mind the move in the US Senate to initiate a new look at American Eastern policy etc.) are knocking the wind out of the sails of the post-war alliance system.

Moreover, military alliances are experiencing intra-bloc fissures. French disillusionment with Nato is not entirely due to the Gaullian concept of grandeur and independence. It has been shaped by events like the use of the American base at Evreux for transporting Belgian paratroops on a "rescue mission" in the Congo, the same bases being used as take-off points for photographic reconnaissance of French atomic installations at Pierrelatte. Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary are suggesting reductions in the number of Soviet troops in their countries to boost their image of independence.

Military alliances have thus become a little obsolete, a little dishonest and a little embarrassing, and certainly out of harmony with what they were intended for. A search is on for probable alternative functions of military alliances (vide series of articles in the *International Journal*, spring 1966).

Mr Subrata Roy Chowdhury's book would appear, on surface, to be a little out of tune with the current trends. Nevertheless, it makes an invaluable contribution to the literature on the "charterability" of military alliances with the UN system. In a well-conceived and thought-provoking analysis he examines the recent trends in military alliances and their compatibility with the UN Charter. Part II of the book is devoted to an excellent argument on the institution of neutrality in a shooting war and in the cold war.

In such a comprehensive work there are bound to be some jarring notes and frail arguments, but the main difficulty with Mr Roy Chowdhury's book is his wrong understanding of the edifice on which the UN collective security system is built. Let us take up as an illustration his treatment of the alliances in the framework of the UN. He is caught here in a maze of misconceptions about the role of the UN in the field of peace and security with the result that his conclusions are faulty. I must admit that this is not because of lack of scholarly erudition, which he has in abundance, but because of conceptual inexactitude about the thematic set-up of the UN.

Mr Roy Chowdhury identifies three justifications advanced by writers to bring the military alliances into the Charter scheme. The three principal theories are that (1) they are justified as "collective measures" undertaken by a group of individual members to maintain international peace and security within the meaning of Article 1 (1) of the Charter; (2) they are justified as measures of collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter; (3) they are justified as regional arrangements permitted in Chapter VIII (Articles 52-54) of the Charter. He attacks all the three theories as baseless to arrive at this conclusion:

"If the military pacts of the Western and the Soviet systems cannot be justified on any of the

three grounds we have examined, there seem to be no other provisions within the four corners of the Charter to support them. In our submission, the pith and substance of the Charter is to substitute collective preparation and collective action by an individual State or group of States for the maintenance of international peace and security. If there is a threat to the peace, the United Nations must act. Collective measures (i.e. United Nations measures) for preventive or enforcement action shall be employed. Individual States or group of States have divested themselves of this responsibility." (p. 144).

Collective Security

Note the lumping together of the "collective preparation" with "collective action" and the equation of individual or collective action in self-defence with the action taken by the United Nations for the maintenance of peace and security. In fact the confusion begins with Mr Roy Chowdhury's analysis of the UN collective security system. He believes that the UN creates a perfect "collective security" system; that "military alliances outside the control of the United Nations were bound to undermine the world organization." (p. 65). In his view the military alliances to be valid must surmount the prohibition of Article 2(4) (p. 71). At another place he characterizes self-defence as an interim sanction (p. 115).

My criticism against this is that the UN does not provide for a perfect collective security system. It is only capable, even constitutionally (observe the veto), of being used as a fire brigade (which is not a mean job in an inflammable world) and not as a lion-tamer. Secondly, the UN does not appropriate to itself "the central monopoly of force". It enjoys only "centralized direction of force". There is no monopoly vis-a-vis the Permanent Five. Even a small Power could get the UN machinery ground to a halt by claiming to act in self-defence, if only it can egg a Permanent Member on to use the veto in the application of sanctions. But what confounds me most is the equation of defensive preparations with collective enforcement measures. Even in municipal law preparation to commit an offence is not punish-

ed till the last proximate act is committed.

There are three phases to any normative order or regime of law: (1) prohibition; (2) prescription; (3) punishment. The Charter also attempts to create one such regime. The first element is found in Article 2(4), read with Article 51; the second in Chapter VI, complemented with Chapter VIII; the third in Chapter VII, read with Article 106.

The prohibitive aspect of the UN regime of law is not rigid. A distinction is made between permissive (Arts. 51 and 106) and non-permissive (Art. 2(4) coercion. The prescriptive procedures laid out in Chapter VI (especially Art. 33) are supplemented with complementary dispute-settlement machinery in regional agencies. It is in the sanctions that the UN keeps a monopoly obliging regional enforcement action dependent upon Security Council 'authorization'. But, then, use of force as a "sanction", individual or collective, is different from use of force in "self-defence", individual or collective. If a group of members resort to force by way of a sanction they are obliged to take UN authorization, but if they resort to force in self-defence it is protected by Article 51 of the Charter. Mr Roy Chowdhury's attack on the military alliances thus loses all its vehemence if one bears in mind the exact nature of the collective security that is sought to be created under the UN and the distinction between use of force in defence and as a sanction.

The book is written in a lucid and forceful language and the publication is neat. It should serve as a source of inspiration for Indian scholars exploring avenues of peace.

RAHMATULLAH KHAN

Letters

Men And Machines

Anti-Soviet campaign can be most effective if American and Chinese propaganda is blended together in a clever manner. The correspondent who wrote "Men and Machines" (*Now*, August 26) had some such motive when he wanted to present the readers with a spicy anti-Soviet delicacy, but, alas, incomplete mastery of some skills made it incohe-

rent and self-contradictory though not, by any means, uninteresting.

A few days back American military sources issued a statement that to bring down only 17 planes North Vietnam had to fire 300 Soviet-made SAMs. The Americans cannot be expected to admit the superiority of Soviet weapons, but it gave your correspondent an opportunity to prove that rusty and outdated military hardware forms the bulk of Soviet supplies to North Vietnam. The latest figure of US planes downed over North Vietnam, available from Hanoi, is about 1300—in August alone 105 planes have been shot down—whereas the Americans put it around 350. If one is to believe the statement of the Vietnamese, surely the Soviet SAMs played a significant role in the air battles. For denouncing the Soviet Union, however, it is convenient to quote American figures.

More planes have indeed been shot down by radar-controlled guns but this is because, as your correspondent also agrees, US planes make low-level approaches to avoid SAMs. The surface-to-air missiles can only be useful in combating enemy planes at high altitude and are not substitutes for anti-aircraft guns. Despite the alleged worthlessness of Soviet missiles the American pilots show a distinct preference for flying at low levels where prospects of survival are better and these low-altitude air battles explain the comparatively low toll taken by the Soviet missiles. (The Defence Correspondent of *The Times*, London, expressed a similar view in the issue of August 9).

Your correspondent is not sure whether the Russians will supply "their latest ground-to-air missiles" (what is the latest model?) but it seems to be his conviction—to prove this he quotes Chinese statistics—that the charges levelled against the Soviet Union are more or less valid. I cannot just understand what he means by "whispering campaign". Last year China herself asserted that she would not allow military supplies "not in accordance with the agreement reached" to pass through her territory. It was Cuba, and not the Soviet Union, which condemned Chinese action and Castro made it plain that Chinese co-operation can "turn North Vietnam into a cemetery of US Planes". I am interested to know—since such expression as "Russians and Chinese can continue to quarrel" has been

used—whether there has been a single case of public condemnation of China by the Soviet Union on Vietnam so far.

Whatever opportunity the Vietnam conflict has given to some people to sell their political line, the attempt to raise a controversy over the nature of Soviet assistance cannot but be regarded as an insult to the Vietnamese people. The Vietnamese, the makers of a great revolution, know better than anyone else what assistance they require, since even without "latest" weapons, they are confident of giving a decent burial to US imperialism in South-East Asia. Their refusal to be the pawn of any "big power" is as stubborn as their determination to throw the invaders out of Indo-China.

S. ISLAM
Calcutta

The Day Of Repentance

Mr Chaudhuri in his article "The Day of Repentance" (*Now*, August 19) seems to champion the cause of pessimism, inertia and frustration. This feeling of frustration, this alienation from the mainstream of life and a kind of 'poetic' loneliness, quite personal to Mr Chaudhuri, indicate an attitude of life which is enervating. His passing remark that Marxian doctrine "was less of an intellectual theory than a kind of religious faith" is irresponsible. The faith in the future of man is not derived from divine inspiration but is due to the teaching of Marx and Engels who urged the working class to know itself and be conscious of itself. Marx and Engels substituted science for dreams.

Mr Chaudhuri talks of a regeneration to be achieved through moral programmes as a remedy against political problems. Mahatma Gandhi adopted a moral programme with a view to easing political complexities; basically, his approach was never free from religious bias. But his role in spiritualising politics and his famous theory of the 'dictates of inner voice' had an ominous impact on the minds of the people of this sub-continent. The Khilafat movement which he launched was more religious than political and the result was quite contrary to the aims and objects of the movement itself. A growing disharmony between the Hindus and Muslims, sanguinary

communal riots and moral degeneration appeared in the political life of the Indian people. His advocacy of the charka in preference to modern innovations, and his explanation of the 1934 earthquake in Bihar as being a punishment for the practice of untouchability reflected an outlook and approach to life which was not only highly irrational but also immoral. Immoral in the sense that it aimed at keeping the people away from truth and it taught them to substitute emotion for reason, medievalism for progress. This is what he achieved by his zealous efforts "to bring together Indian nationalism and morality".

ATINDRA CHOWDHURY
Calcutta

Passports

We were most surprised to read some of the critical remarks against the Regional Passport Office, Calcutta, appearing in "Calcutta Diary" of your issue of August 12. Particularly, the statement of your columnist that a visit to it "...can be a nightmarish experience..." struck us as being far removed from truth. Two of our members left in the first week of August to participate in one of our work camps in Ceylon. None of them had access to any special influence; yet one of them got his passport the day after he submitted his completed application, and the other, the day his application arrived at the Passport Office from his district administration, though he had sat on his papers for five days despite repeated requests to expedite despatch.

The treatment both of them received at the office was most courteous and prompt.

AMARNATH ROY
Assistant Secretary
Service Civil International
West Bengal Branch

Peace With Neighbours

Apropos of 'Peace with Neighbours' (August 19), India can achieve peace with Pakistan and China only by parting with some territory. Do you suggest that India should do it for the sake of peace? If anybody suggests that way he should say so publicly. Merely to blame India for not negotiating peace will not help.

GOBIND PUSKAS
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QUALITY CONTROL

✓ = O.K.
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	MOVEMENT						
PRESSURE	✓	✓	✓				
REFLECTOR	✓	✓					
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FOCUS	✓	✗					
THREAD FITTING	✓	✓					
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BARREL & BASE	✓	✓					✗
HEAD & HEAD RING	✓	✓					
BARREL & HOLDER	✓	✓	✓				
FINISH OF TORCH	✓	✓	✓				

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